

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

5 This Amendment is filed in response to the Office Action mailed September 25, 2003. In that Office Action, claims 1-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,589,491 to Peddicord et al or U.S. Patent 6,183,704 to Peddicord in view of either of U.S. Patent 2,895,753 to Fentiman or U.S. Patent 5,061,219 to Glickman. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for the reasons set out hereinafter.

10 Claims 1 and 2 have been canceled without prejudice. The rejection of claims 2-18 is believed unfounded. Initially, there is no incentive to combine the teachings of the patents. Fentiman is not used in a salt platform environment. Glickman is a construction toy, Further, Fentiman only discloses a friction engagement between a hub B and a tube C where the tube C has been flattened at an end to fit within the keyway 10. Tube C is held within the hub B only by
15 compression forces and the tube C could fall out of either end of the hub B if a force is applied in service to move the tube C along the keyway. In contrast, as set forth in dependent claim 11, the present invention can include a locking bar to positively lock the radial brace to the hub.

20 Further, Glickman only discloses a construction toy that uses a hub like connector element 10 having sockets 14 with opposed gripping elements 16 with concave grooves 18. Structural elements 13 of Glickman fit between the gripping elements. Again, the structural elements 13 of Glickman could escape out either side of the gripping elements 16, whereas the present invention can include a locking bar to secure the radial brace to the hub as presented in
25 claim 11.

 Neither Fentiman nor Glickman disclose the use of curved braces as presented in claim 5. Neither Fentiman nor Glickman disclose the use of hubs having a cylindrical socket for receiving vertical support members as presented in claim 6. Neither Fentiman nor Glickman disclose the use of curved braces with a pipe holder as presented in claim 7. Neither Fentiman nor Glickman

disclose the use of a stub spoke having a pipe holder and a thinned section connecting the locking member and the pipe holder to permit pivotal motion therebetween as presented in claims 12 and 13. Thus, a rejection under Section 103 over the references can not be sustained.

5 New claims 19-22 have been added to recite the locking element of the hub having a locking slot with a key hole cross-section and a locking bar, and the locking element of the connector having a T-shape portion and a flexible catch, with the T-shape portion sliding into the locking slot of the hub until the flexible catch deflects over the locking bar to lock the connector to the hub. None of the cited references disclose any such structure. As noted, Fentiman relies
10 solely on a friction engagement while Glickman uses opposed gripping elements with concave grooves. Claims 20 further identifies the connector as a radial brace while claim 21 identifies the connector as a stub spoke with a pipe holder and a thinned section connecting the locking member and pipe holder to permit pivotal motion therebetween.

15 New Claim 22 further defines the nature of the key hole cross-section and the T-shape portion. The hub and connector of the present invention simply slide together until they are latched by the catch and locking bar as all the mating surfaces of the hub and connector are parallel each other as claimed. In Fentiman, the keyways 10 taper towards the bottom of the keyways as set forth at Column 3, lines 67-68. Thus the keyways of Fentiman are not parallel.
20 Further, since the walls 18 are slightly arcuate or convex, as set forth at Column 4, lines 42-46, the surfaces at the end of the tube C are not parallel either. As noted previously, Glickman relies on gripping elements 16 with concave grooves 18 and circular cross section structural elements 13. Therefore, Glickman does not disclose parallel surfaces either.

25 Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this application. No additional fees are believed necessary for the proper filing of this Amendment. However, if any additional fees are necessary, including any extension fees under Rule 136, please withdraw such fees as are necessary from Deposit Account 50-1274(11162 2001).

Respectfully submitted,



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